4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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In addition to these widespread national patterns, Bang Chan has certain characteristics that seem relatively distinctive of villages of the Central Plain. Not of least importance is the demographic arrangement of the community: either isolated homesteads surrounded by rice fields and connected to larger canals by small tributaries or groups of households strung out along both sides of the canals. The former pattern is more commonplace and historically more recent, and is the result of an expanding population trying to live on a land that has been so committed to the commercialized cultivation of rice that the only available house sites are on the fields themselves. This "typical Central Plain" pattern contrasts with the "cluster" type villages found in the North and Northeast (deYoung 1955) where houses are integrated into compact communities around which are located the rice fields. Although it is difficult to draw precise relationships between demographic arrangements and psychological characteristics, it is noteworthy that the isolated locale of so many Bang Chan households is not out of keeping with the independent and individualistic propensities of the villagers. As one villager expressed it, "If people live far away from each other, there will not be any trouble."

Related to the above pattern and characteristic of other communities of the Central region (cf. Kaufman 1960) is the absence among village residents of any strong sense of identification with the needs of their community as a whole. Except for religious activities and the reciprocal work groups organized for rice transplanting and harvesting—the rewards for which are directly personal—the villagers simply are not predisposed to participate in communal projects. Thus, activities which require large-scale coöperation or organization to be effective—clearing or deepening canals, repairing the unusable road that leads from the main highway to the school, building a playground for the school—are either not carried out or are effected only with extreme difficulty. Although a few villagers recognize these as defects of social organization, it is clear that the majority find it easier to live with them than to try to change the basic institutional framework that sustains them; maintaining their own freedom of action is simply more important, and more culturally "natural," to the villagers than getting involved in public service projects. Again, this pattern seems to contrast with that found in the villages of the North (deYoung 1955) where individuals regularly contribute labor to their communities by repairing village streets and maintaining irrigation systems, even when such efforts require coöperation between adjacent villages.

The inability of Bang Chaners to organize coöperative projects is undoubtedly abetted by the formal governmental structure of the village which, although perhaps more of an administrative nightmare than is normally found elsewhere in the Central Plain, is in its organizational

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631 essentials not atypical of the region. Instead of villages being organized administratively on the basis of natural social groupings and demarcations—that is, social centers and groups with which people feel a primary identification, in Bang Chan's case the local Buddhist monastery and government primary school—so that governmental and social units are isomorphic, they are gerrymandered into highly arbitrary administrative units. Thus the village of Bang Chan is comprised of seven *muubaan* or hamlets, at the head of which are seven hamlet headmen; these hamlets are located in two different *tambon*, or communes (four in one commune, three in the other) headed by two commune headmen, neither of whom lives in Bang Chan; the two communes are located in two different districts headed by two different district officers and their staffs; the two districts fortunately are in a single province, Phranakhoon, the same administrative unit in which the metropolis of Bangkok is located. Yet the people who reside in these varying hamlets located in different communes and districts all perceive themselves as living in the single village of Bang Chan. The fundamental organizational problem here is that since the sources and lines of governmental authority do not follow the lines of the natural Bang Chan community, jurisdictional conflicts and confusions arise to threaten the effectiveness of those community-wide programs that occasionally may be initiated. For example, during a diphtheria immunization campaign in the village (Hanks and Hanks 1955), the public health officer from one of the district offices was reluctant to immunize all the children of Bang Chan on the grounds that some of them came from hamlets outside his district's jurisdiction; he yielded, as the Hankses note, only when a perceptive villager pointed out that if germs knew no boundaries why should he?

Not all villages of the Central region have such real or potential administrative difficulties. (And Bang Chan does not have them too frequently either, principally because the government does not initiate too many community service programs.) However, the basic organizational principle which admits them—that houses are grouped together as administrative "villages" on the basis of conceptual neatness rather than socially functional criteria—is a common feature of the administrative structure of the Central Plain.

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792 The foregoing account describes some basic culture patterns which Bang Chan shares with other villages of either the region or the nation. In addition to these broader patterns, Bang Chan has certain traits which inevitably refer to local village conditions and contingencies. For example, the most active and viable social unit in Bang Chan beyond the familial level is the order of Buddhist monks associated with the monastery. It is the only organization within the village that has been successful in mobilizing community activity (Sharp *et al.* 1953), although much of this activity has